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THE PHANTOM SHIP.

BY CAPTAIN MARYAT, C. B.
(Continued from the last Herald.)

CHAPTER XXXI.

As every one depends upon the want of comfort in the Phantom, it is to be presumed that there are no comfortable ones. Certainly that to which Philip and Krantz were ushered, had any thing to do with the air of an agreeable residence. It was under the foot, with a very small aperture looking towards the sea, for light and air. It was a room, and moreover destitute of all those little conveniences which add so much to one's happiness in modern houses and hotels. In fact, it consisted of four bare walls, and a stone floor, and that was all.

Philip wished to make some inquiries relative to Amine, addressed, in Portuguese, the waiter who brought them down.

"My good friend, I beg your pardon?"

"And I beg yours," replied the soldier, going to the door and looking thence.

"Philip leant gloomily against the wall; Krantz, however, walked up and down three steps and away he went.

"Do you know what I am thinking of?" observed Krantz, after a pause in his walk. "It is very strange that (drowning his voice), we have all been so anxious about it; if they don't search us, we may yet get away by bribing."

"I was thinking," replied Philip, "that I would sooner be here than in company with that wretched Schiften, whose sight is poison to me."

"I did not much admire the appearance of the commandant, but I suppose we shall know more as we go."

How they were interrupted by the turning of the key, and the entrance of a soldier with a chafin of water, and a large dish of boiled rice. He was not the man who had brought them to the door, and Philip accosted him.

"You have had hard work within these last ten days?"

"Yes, indeed, signor."

"The next morning we go to join the expedition, and we expect."

"So I heard you say, signor."

"They lost nearly a thousand men," said Krantz. "Holy St. Francis! I am glad of it."

"They will be careful how they attack the Portuguese in a hurry," rejoined Krantz.

"I think so," replied the soldier.

"Did you lose many men?" ventured Philip, perceiving that the man was loquacious.

"Not one of our own people. In the factory there were about a hundred of the natives, with some women and children; but that is of no consequence."

"You had a young European woman here, I understand," said Philip with anxiety; "one who was wrecked in a vessel—was she among those who were lost?"

"Young woman—Holy St. Francis. Yes, I can recollect. What the fact is—"

"Peter!" called a voice from above: the man stopped, put his fingers to his lips, went out, and locked the door.

"God of Heaven! give me patience," cried Philip; "this is too trying."

"He will be down here again to-morrow morning," observed Krantz.

"Yes, to-morrow morning; but what an endless one will suppose make of the intervening hours."

"I feel for you," replied Krantz; "but what can be done? The hours must pass, though some days draw them out into interminable years; but I have footstep."

Again the door was unlocked, and the first soldier made his appearance. "Follow me—the next morning we go to join the expedition," said Philip by Philip and his companion. They walked up the narrow stone steps, and at last found themselves in a small room, in presence of the commandant, with whom our readers have been already made acquainted. He was looking at a small sofa, his long sword lay on the table before him, and two young native women were sitting him, one at his head, and the other at his feet.

"Where did you get those dresses?" was the first interrogatory.

"The natives when they brought us prisoners from the island on which we had saved ourselves, took away our clothes, and gave us these as a present from their king."

"And engaged you to serve in their fleet, in the attack on this fort?"

"They forced us," replied Krantz; "for, as there was no war between our nations, we objected to their service; notwithstanding which, they put us on board to make the common people believe that we were assisted by Europeans."

"How am I to know the truth of this?"

"You have our word in the first place, and our escape from them in the second."

"You belonged to a Dutch East India man. Are you still an officer or common sailor?"

"Krantz, who considered that they were less likely to be detained if they concealed their rank on board, gave Philip a tight look with his finger, as he replied, "We are inferior officers. I was third mate, and this man was pilot."

"And your captain, where is he?"

"I cannot say whether he is alive or dead."

"Has no one on board?"

"Yes! the captain had his wife."

"What has become of her?"

"She is supposed to have perished on a portion of the raft which broke adrift."

"Alas!" replied the commandant, who remained silent for some time.

Philip looked at Krantz, as much as to say, why all this subtlety? But Krantz gave him a sign to leave him to speak.

"You say you don't know whether your captain is alive or dead?"

"I do."

"Now, suppose I was to give you your liberty, would you have any objection to sign a paper, stating his death and swearing to the truth of it?"

Philip stared at the commandant, and then at Krantz.

"I see no objection, except that if it were sent to Holland, we might get into trouble. May I ask, signor commandant, why you wish for such a paper?"

"I don't doubt—in fact—I'm sure he must be dead," said Krantz, drawing out the words in a musing manner. "Commandant, will you give us till to-morrow morning to make our calculations?"

"Yes, you may go."

"But not to the dungeon, commandant," replied Krantz; "we are not prisoners certainly; and you wish us to do you a favour, surely you will let us be free."

"By your own acknowledgment you have taken up arms against the most Christian King; however, you may remain at liberty for the night—tomorrow morning will decide whether or no you are prisoners."

Philip and Krantz thanked the little commandant for his kindness, and then hastened away to their quarters. It was now dark, and the moon

had not yet made her appearance. They sat there on the parapet, enjoying the breeze, and feeling the delight of liberty, even after their short incarceration; but near to them, soldiers were either standing or lying, and they spoke but in whispers.

"What could he mean by requiring us to give a certificate of the captain's death, and why did you answer as you did?"

"Philip Vanderdecken, that I have often thought of the fate of your beautiful wife, you may imagine; and when I heard that she was brought here, I then trembled for her. What must she appear, lovely as she is, when placed in comparison with the women of this country? And that little commandant—he is not the very person who would be taken with her charms? I denied our condition, because I thought he would be more likely to allow us our liberty as humble individuals, than as captain and chief mate, particularly as he suspects that we led on the 'Ternate people' to the attack; and when he asked for a certificate of your death, I immediately imagined that he wanted it in order to induce Amine to marry him. But where is she? is the question. If we could only find out that soldier, we might gain some information."

"Depend upon it, she is here," replied Philip, clenching his hands.

"I am inclined to think so," said Krantz; "that she is alive, I feel assured."

The conversation was continued until the moon rose, and threw her beams over the tumbled walls. Philip and Krantz turned their faces towards the sea, and leant over the battlements in silence; after some time their reveries were disturbed by a person coming up to them with a "Buena noche, signor."

Krantz immediately recognised the Portuguese soldier, whose conversation with him had been interrupted.

"Good night, my friend! I thank Heaven that you have no longer to turn the key upon us."

"Yes, I'm surprised!" replied the soldier in a low tone. "Our commandant is fond of exercising his power; he rules here without appeal, that I can tell you."

"He is not within hearing of us now," replied Krantz. "It is a lovely spot this to live in! How long have you been in this country?"

"Now, thirteen years, signor, and I'm tired of it. I have a wife and children in Oporto—that is, I had—but whether they are alive or not, who can tell?"

"Do you expect to return and see them?"

"Return—signor! no Portuguese soldier like me ever returns. We are enlisted for five years, and we leave our bones here."

"That is hard indeed."

"Hard, signor," replied the soldier, in a low whisper; "it is cruel and treacherous. I have often thought of putting the muzzle of my arquebuse to my head; but while there's life, there's hope."

"I pity you, my good fellow," rejoined Krantz; "look you, I have two gold pieces left—take one, you may be able to send it home to your wife."

And here is one of mine, too, my good fellow, added Philip, putting another into his hand.

"Now may all the saints preserve you, signor," replied the soldier, as he took the gold piece; "I shall be glad to know of you, and of your wife and children, for much chance of ever receiving it."

"You were speaking about a young European woman when we were in the dungeon," observed Krantz, after a pause.

"Yes, signor, she was a very beautiful creature. Our commandant was very much in love with her."

"Where is she now?"

"She went away to Goa, in company with a priest who knew her. Father Mathias, a good old man, he gave me absolution when he was here."

"Father Mathias?" exclaimed Philip; but a touch from Krantz checked him.

"You say the commandant loved her?"

"Oh yes; the little man was quite mad about her; and had it not been for the arrival of Father Mathias, he would never have let her go, that I'm sure of, although she was another man's wife."

"Said for Goa, you said?"

"Yes, in a ship which called here. She must have been very glad to have got away for a little commandant persecuted her all day long, and she was evidently grieving for her husband. Do you know, signor, if her husband is alive?"

"No, we do not; we have heard nothing of him."

"Well, if he is, I hope he will not come here; for should the commandant have him in his power, it would be hard with him. He is a man who sticks to his thing. He is a brave little fellow, that cannot be denied; but to get possession of that lady, he would remove all obstacles at any risk—and a husband is a very serious one, signor."

"Well, signor," continued the soldier, after a pause, "I had better not be seen here too long; you may command me if you want any thing; recollect, my name is Pedro—good night to you, and a thousand thanks; and the soldier walked away."

"We have made one friend at all events," said Krantz, and we have gained some information of no little importance."

"Most important," replied Philip. "Amine has sailed for Goa with Father Mathias. I feel that she is safe, and in good hands. He is an excellent man, that Father Mathias—my mind is much relieved."

"Yes; but recollect you are in the power of your enemy. We must leave this place as quick as we can—to-morrow we must sign the paper. It is of little consequence, as we shall probably be at Goa before it arrives; and even if we are not, the news of your death would not occasion Amine to marry this little wretched piece of mortality."

"That I feel assured of; but it may cause her great suffering."

"Not worse than her present suspense, believe me, Philip; but it is useless canvassing the past—it must be done. I shall sign as Cornelius Richter, our third mate; you, as Jacob Vantreut—recollect that."

"Agreed," replied Philip, who then turned away, as if willing to be left to his own thoughts. Krantz perceived it, and laid down under the embrasure, and was soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Tired out with the fatigue of the day before, Philip had laid himself down by Krantz and fallen asleep; early the next morning he was awakened by the sound of the commandant's voice, and his long sword rattling as usual upon the pavement. He rose and found the little man raving the soldiers—threatening some with the dungeons, others with extra duty. Krantz was also on his feet before the commandant had finished his morning's lecture. At last, perceiving them, in a stern voice he ordered them to follow him into his apartment. They did so, and the commandant throwing himself upon his sofa, required whether they were ready to sign the required paper, or go back to the dungeon—Krantz replied that they had been calculating chances, and that they were in consequence so perfectly convinced of the death of the captain, that they were willing to sign any paper to that effect; at which reply, the commandant immediately became very gracious, and having called for materials, he wrote out the document, which was duly subscribed by Krantz and Philip. As soon as they had signed it, he had it in his

possession, the little man was so pleased, that he requested them to partake of his breakfast.

During the repast, he promised that they should leave the island by the first opportunity. Although Philip was taciturn, yet as Krantz made himself very agreeable, the commandant invited them to dinner. Krantz, as they became more familiar, informed him that they had each a few pieces of gold, and wished to be allowed a room where they could keep their table. Whether it was the want of society or the desire of obtaining the gold, probably both, the commandant offered that they should join his table and pay their proportion of the expenses; a proposal which was gladly accepted to. The terms were arranged, and Krantz insisted upon putting down the first week's payment in advance. From that moment the commandant was the best of friends with them, and did nothing but attend them when he had so politely shored out a portion below water. It was on the evening of the third day, as they were smoking their Manila cheroots, that Krantz, perceiving the commandant in a peculiar good humour, ventured to ask him why he was so anxious for a certificate of the captain's death; and in reply was informed, much to the astonishment of Philip, that Amine had agreed to marry him upon his producing such a document.

"Impossible," cried Philip, starting from his seat.

"Impossible, signor, and why impossible?" replied the commandant curling his mustaches with his fingers, with a surprised and angry air.

"I should have said impossible too," interrupted Krantz, who perceived the consequence of Philip's indiscretion; for had you seen, commandant, how that woman, whom you call her husband, how she fondled him, you would with us have said, it was impossible that she could have transferred her affections so soon; but women are women, and soldiers have a great advantage over other people; perhaps she has some excuse; commandant—here's your health, and success to you."

"It is exactly what I would have said," added Philip, acting upon Krantz's plan; "but she has a great excuse, commandant, when I recollect her husband, and have you in my presence?"

Soothed with the flattery, the commandant replied, "Why, yes, they say military men are very successful with the fair sex—I presume it is because they look up to us for protection, and where can they be better assisted at it, than with a man who wears a sword at his thigh—Come, signor, we will drink her health. Here's to the beautiful Amine Vanderdecken!"

"To the beautiful Amine Vanderdecken," cried Krantz, tossing off his wine.

"To the beautiful Amine Vanderdecken," followed Philip. "But, commandant, are you not afraid to trust her at Goa, where there are so many enticements for a woman, so many allurements held out for her sex?"

"No, not in the least—I am convinced that she loves me—between ourselves, that she does upon me."

"How, signor? is that addressed to me?" cried the commandant, seizing his sword which lay on the table.

"No, no," replied Philip, recovering himself; "it was addressed to her; I have heard her swear to her husband, that she would exist for no other but him."

"Ha! ha! Is that all?" replied the commandant, "my friend, you do not know women."

"No, not in the least; but I know women," replied Krantz, who then leant over to the commandant and whispered, "He is always so when you talk of women. He was cruelly jilted once, and hates the whole sex."

"Then we must be merciful to him," replied the little officer; "suppose we change the subject."

When they retired to their own room, Krantz pointed out to Philip the necessity for his commanding his feelings, as otherwise they would again be immersed in the dungeon. Philip acknowledged his rashness, but pointed out to Krantz, that the circumstance of Amine having promised to marry the commandant, if he procured certain intelligence of his death, was the cause of his irritation.

"Can it be so? Is it possible that she can have been so false?" exclaimed Philip; "yet his anxiety to procure that document seems to warrant the truth of his assertion."

"I think, Philip, that in all probability it is true," replied Krantz, carelessly; "but of this you may be assured, that she has been placed in a situation of great peril, and has only done it to save herself; she will fully prove to you that necessity had compelled her to do so, and that, in that way, and that if she had not done so, she would, by this time, have fallen a prey to his violence."

"It may be," replied Philip gravely.

"It is so, Philip, my life upon it. Do not for a moment harbor a thought so injurious to one who lives but in your love. Suspect that fond and devoted creature! I blush for you, Philip Vanderdecken."

"You are right, and I beg her pardon for allowing such feelings or thoughts to have for one moment overpowered me," responded Philip; "but it is a hard case for a husband, who loves as I do, to hear his wife's name bandied about, and his character assailed by a contemptible wretch like this commandant."

"It is, I grant; but still I prefer even that to a dungeon," replied Krantz, "and so, good night."

For three weeks they remained in the fort, every day becoming more intimate with the commandant, who often communicated with Krantz, while Philip was not present, turning the conversation upon his love for Amine, and entering into a minute detail of all that passed. Krantz perceived that he was right in his opinion, and that Amine had been carrying the commandant, that she might escape. But the time passed heavily away with Philip and Krantz, for no vessel made its appearance.

"When shall I see her again?" philosophized Philip one morning as he lolled over the parapet, in company with Krantz.

"See who? said the commandant, who happened to be at his elbow.

Philip turned round and stammered something ungrammatical.

"We were talking of his sister, commandant," said Krantz, taking his arm, and leading him away.

"Do not mention the subject to my friend, for it is a very painful one, and forms one reason why he is so inimical to the sex. She was married to his intimate friend, and ran away from her husband; it was his only sister, and the disgrace broke his mother's heart, and has made him miserable."

"Take no notice of it, I beg."

"No, not certainly not; I don't wonder at it; it is a hard case for a husband, who loves as I do, to hear his wife's name bandied about, and his character assailed by a contemptible wretch like this commandant."

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"Oh no," replied Krantz;—"that it is not, I assure you; but my lips are sealed on that point."

"Of course, except to a friend, who can keep a secret. I will not ask it now. So he really is noble?"

"One of the highest families in the country, possessing great wealth and influence—affiliated to the Spanish nobility by marriage."

"Indeed!" rejoined the commandant, musing; "I dare say he knows many of the Portuguese as well."

"No doubt of it, they are all more or less connected."

"He must prove to you a most valuable friend, Signor Richter."

"I consider myself provided for for life as soon as we return home. He is of a very grateful, generous disposition, as he would prove to you, should you ever fall in with him again."

"I have no doubt of it; and I can assure you that I am heartily tired of staying in this country. Here I shall remain probably for two years more before I am relieved, and then shall have to join my regiment at Goa, and not be able to obtain leave to return home without resigning my commission. But he is coming this way."

After this conversation with Krantz, the alteration in the manner of the Portuguese commandant, who had the highest respect for nobility, was most marked. He treated Philip with respect, which was observable to all in the fort; and which was, until Krantz had explained the cause, a source of astonishment to Philip himself. The commandant often introduced the subject to Krantz, and sounded him as to whether he conducted towards Philip had been such as to have made a favourable impression; for the little man now hoped, that through such an influential channel, he might reap some benefit.

Some days after this conversation, as they were all three seated at table, a corporal entered, and saluting the commandant, informed him that a Dutch sailor had arrived at the fort, and wished to know whether he should be admitted. Both Philip and Krantz were silent at this communication—they had a presentiment of evil, but they said nothing. The sailor was ordered in, and in a few minutes, who should make his appearance, but their tormentor, the one-eyed Schiften. On perceiving Philip and Krantz seated at the table, he immediately exclaimed,